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International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
Fifty-first session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Sweden

1. At its 1224th and 1225th meetings, held on 8 and 11 August 1997, the Committee considered the twelfth periodic report of Sweden (CERD/C/280/Add.4), and adopted, at its 1240th meeting, held on 20 August 1997, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the detailed report submitted by the State party, which contains relevant information about measures taken with respect to the implementation of the Convention since the consideration of the eleventh periodic report. The Committee also welcomes the detailed answers to questions raised and concerns expressed during the consideration of the report. It expresses its appreciation for the frank and constructive dialogue with the delegation and for the comprehensive and thorough answers given orally to the wide range of questions asked by members.

B. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

3. It is noted that the recession has had serious consequences for the State party in general and has led to severe setbacks for refugees and immigrants, in particular. The consequences of the recession have been most felt in the labour market situation of refugees and immigrants, who have been found worse off than Swedes in most areas of society, and the gap has been widening.

C. Positive aspects

4. The high standards of the State party regarding the protection of human rights and its affirmed commitment to implementing the provisions of the Convention are noted with appreciation. Sweden is among the limited number of States parties that has made the declaration under article 14 of the Convention and has accepted the amendment to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention.

5. The statement to the effect that the State party has in just a few decades developed from a relatively ethnically homogenous society into a multi-cultural society (para.2 of the report) has been noted with great interest and appreciation.

6. The Committee notes that the State party intends to review the Act against Ethnic Discrimination of 1994 because it is not having the desired effect.

7. The Committee welcomes the adoption of new legislation which broadens the definition of "refugee".

8. The activities of various governmental institutions concerned with integration policies and combating racism and xenophobia, such as the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Swedish Immigration Board, the Parliamentary Commission entrusted with the task to review Swedish immigration and refugee policies, and the Parliamentary Commission reviewing policies with respect to the long-term integration of immigrants and refugees in Sweden as well as the active participation of the State party in international efforts to combat racism are welcomed.

9. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Sami Parliament and will follow its work with interest.

10. Note is taken with appreciation of the fact that in Sweden non-nationals have the right to vote and stand for election in municipal elections.

11. It is noted with appreciation that the State party has established a system of education for refugees and immigrants.

D. Principal subjects of concern

12. The Committee expresses concern at the finding of a research project conducted by the National Council for Crime Prevention that crimes with racial motives have increased since 1980.

13. The social position of Roma, particularly in such areas as education and employment, has been found to be less favourable than that of the rest of the population. As a result, many of them depend on social welfare benefits.

14. Concern is expressed that existing legislation does not fully implement article 4 of the Convention.

15. Concern is expressed about the low and declining participation by non-nationals in local elections.

16. Concern is also expressed at the activities based on ideas or theories of racial superiority of various organizations and individuals in the State party, and at the increasing dissemination of recorded music, with lyrics promoting hatred against ethnic minorities.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

17. The Committee recommends that the State party, while reviewing its legislation, pay particular attention to the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention, in particular article 4, and calls attention to its General Recommendation XV.

18. The Committee recommends that the State party provide in its next periodic report information on the number of complaints, judicial decisions and compensation awards concerning acts of racism in all their forms.

19. It is the view of the Committee that further measures should be taken in order to ensure the use by Sami of their own language.

20. The Committee recommends that the policy of promoting equal opportunity in economic and social life for immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities be reinforced by appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures.

21. The Committee suggests that further action be taken to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are more widely disseminated among the Roma, the Sami and "Tornedal Finns", immigrant associations, and other ethnic groups, as well as among government officials, employers and trade unions. The public should also be better informed about available recourse under article 14 of the Convention. Furthermore, it is recommended that the twelfth periodic report be widely disseminated, along with the concluding observations adopted by the Committee thereon.

22. The Committee recommends that the State party's next periodic report, due on 5 January 1997, be an updating report and that it address all the points raised in the present observations.